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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KHARTOUM 000699

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: VP TAHA WANTS POSITIVE RELATIONS WITH USG, UNITY
FOR SUDAN, AND IDPS TO GO HOME

Classified By: CDA Mark Asquino a.i. for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In a May 25 meeting, an unusually loquacious GNU Second Vice-President Ali Osman Taha told Codel Isakson (Senator Johnny Isakson R-Georgia, Senator Bob Corker, R-Tennessee) CDA a.i. Asquino, and emboffs that the GoS wants "direct engagement and direct contact" with the USG, citing a "mountain of respect and admiration of the American people." He said that US sanctions against Sudan impaired his country's ability to find solutions to its conflicts, and called on the USG to assist Sudan to renew ties with international financial institutions. On CPA implementation, he insisted that a majority of Southern Sudanese prefer unity with the North to an independent state, and said that the Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) has failed Southerners. He defended Sudan's humanitarian policy and argued that most residents of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps could return home "at any time," but remain in camps out of dependency syndrome or coercion. He said that "all options are on the table" for a prospective Darfur peace deal, and called on the US to play an active role in its achievement.
END SUMMARY

CONFRONTATION WITH US HAS LED TO BAD OUTCOME FOR BOTH PARTIES

¶2. (C) Sudan VP Taha welcomed Senators Isakson, Corker and CDA Asquino, telling them that "the people and GoS are interested in having positive and normalized relations with the US." He told the Senators that he welcomed their visit to Khartoum and Darfur as "we have an open door policy for visitors to see for themselves." He recalled past positive Sudan-US relations, when "Sudanese students studied in the US, and our universities had good relations with many American counterparts." But he then noted that "Starting with the 1980's, this has changed. The result of this (US-Sudan) confrontation has not led to good outcomes for either party." He expressed interest in improving relations and encouraged additional visits by American delegations to Sudan.

¶3. (C) Taha stressed that "Sudan is paying the price for (USG) sanctions" and said that sanctions have inhibited the government's ability to resolve its internal problems, as USG sanctions have blocked Sudan's access to international lending institutions such as IMF and the World Bank. "Its like the chicken and the egg. We are supposed to solve conflicts and finance post-conflict needs while being subject to sanctions. To solve conflicts, rebuild our society, and

find better livelihoods for people, please let us have normalized relations with your country and other international institutions. Otherwise you will have frustration in the South because they will get nothing out of peace."

BRING PEOPLE OF SUDAN TOGETHER FOR UNITY

¶4. (C) On revenue-sharing within the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), Taha claimed that the GNU is already providing half of its oil revenues to the GOSS, and spending its half of the revenues on the entirety of the North, including Darfur. "At the end of the day, Sudan has very little resources." He said that while many have asked that the North do more to support the South financially, the North is not in a position to contribute any more oil funds "to help our brother Southern Sudanese" beyond its 50%. He underscored the difficulty in developing a country as vast as Sudan after the end of a twenty-one year civil war. "Due to war, all of the infrastructure is down, no roads or communication. The challenge is the size of the country. We have vast resources, but we don't have the key, which is funding and training."

¶5. (C) Taha claimed that if the 2011 Referendum, which gives South Sudan the right to vote for independence or unity through the terms of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement "were held today," a majority of southern Sudanese would vote for unity with the North. He argued that this was true because southerners had not seen significant, positive post-CPA changes under the leadership of the GOSS. "Now they

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are left to themselves and have autonomy, but are not able to deliver, and so the people see that the North is not that bad. People will come to realize that the solution is not to separate." (NOTE: Post believes that the overwhelming sentiments among southern Sudanese is for secession. END NOTE.) He insisted that "even after twenty-one years of civil war, we never broke the human element that connects us. Even during the war, more southern Sudanese came to the North (as refugees) than to our neighbors." He said that difficulties in border demarcation have arisen "because the line has never been in existence in actual terms", but said that the GoS is committed to completing the task of demarcation. To complete implementation of the CPA, he called on the "support of the international community to help the Sudanese people either in the South or the North to find a better life," and complained that "the International Community has let us down by not honoring Oslo I or II." If the Referendum results in unity, Taha said that the Joint Integrated Units (JIUs) made up of Sudanese Armed Forces from the north and Sudanese People's Army forces from the south would be "seeds for a new national army." Like National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) Chief Salah Ghosh, Taha insisted that the end goal of the CPA should be a unified Sudan. "We believe unity will be far superior to separation for the region. You can be of great help to bring people of Sudan together for unity."

IDP CAMPS: NOT THAT INNOCENT

¶6. (C) Taha reserved his sharpest criticism for advocacy groups, such as Save Darfur, and said the regime has been a "victim of a very negative media campaign to tarnish Sudan's image to serve certain groups." Senator Corker advised VP Taha that Sudan has "done things that hurt itself," and its image, such as the March 4/5 expulsions of the 13 NGOs. Taha responded that "no government would do something against its own interests or like to see its image tarnished." He charged that the issues of humanitarian affairs and IDP camps in Darfur have been politicized. However, he promised that the regime is prepared to accept "new NGOs from any country and

facilitate their activity, if we can agree on how to best take care of their (Internally Displaced Persons --IDPs) humanitarian needs in a responsible manner."

17. (C) The Vice-President had broader criticism for the presence of camps for IDPs, which are largely supported by NGOs. Taha made the far-fetched claim that many residents stay in the IDP camps by choice and are, in fact, able to return to their homes at any time. He added that most IDP camp residents come to the camps for rations and become dependent on the services of the foreign NGOs. According to Taha, leaders of rebel factions tell their supporters residing in IDPs camps to remain there and not to return to their original homes, promising that "we will get you a better deal at the end of the day." Taha told the Senators that "Your delegation may be number six-hundred-something", stating that many IDPs flock to the camps to see the wave of visitors. "It has become like a theater!" In a comment that made eyes roll, Taha maintained with a straight-face that some in the IDP camps actually possess a home in town and return to it in the evenings, or in some cases, rent it out to foreigners, while they themselves stay in the IDP camp for free. He said that the IDPs often engage in illegal trade of weapons or drugs. "It is not that innocent, that people are in need and the bad Sudanese government is trying to get them. These camps are in the areas of control of the government, and still many call us these bad names." Taha said the regime has continued to allow the camps to exist out of humanitarian concern, but due to the fact many of the camps have continued to exist for 4-5 years, the Government has considered initiating town planning in the camps to make them permanent settlements.

18. (C) To Senator Corker's question on whether the IDPs could leave the camps and not be victimized by janjaweed militia, Taha responded that in Western and Southern Darfur, many IDPs are already moving back. Taha said that he is leading a government initiative to provide returning IDPs with homes and help them "to restart their normal life." He argued that the IDPs will find it increasingly difficult to return to their native villages, the longer they stay in the camps, as rival groups settle in the IDP's vacated homelands. "The Fur

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have suffered the most by the fighting in Darfur, but the longer they stay in the camps, the more they have to lose. The sooner we have reconciliation, the sooner people can return to their homelands, even if they have to build camps there." Taha defended GoS efforts to resettle IDPs, and complained that "When the Government asks people to go back, the NGOs complain by saying 'why is the government forcing people back when they will be killed and the janjaweed will rape the women.' The people are captive to this humanitarian business," he concluded.

19. (C) Senator Isakson raised Foreign Minister Deng Alor's comment to him earlier in the day that the Darfur conflict could be resolved if the GoS made Darfur one region with a Vice-Presidential position designated in the national government and if it provided compensation to Darfur's people. Taha responded by citing the existence of the Darfur Peace Agreement's (DPA) moribund Transitional Darfur Regional Authority (TDRA), headed by Sudanese Liberation Army rebel leader and DPA signatory Minni Minnawi. Taha said that for a future Darfur peace deal, "All issues are open for discussion at the table." He downplayed the utility of a unified Darfuri state, noting that as opposed to South Sudan, there had not been overwhelming support by Dafuris for a unified region. "The government stance is for the people to decide (on a unified Darfuri state within the central government) by referendum one year after national elections. The GoS has no red line on this. We have agreed to the concept of decentralization and are open for suggestions for Abuja-positive."

110. (C) COMMENT: VP Taha's skeptical (and callous) view of

IDP camps echoes a common frustration in the regime that humanitarian assistance in Darfur in some ways perpetuates the dependency of many Darfuris on foreign aid. While the regime has already eased restrictions on foreign NGOs and allowed some expelled aid groups to return under new auspices, the GoS is likely to continue to call for a return of IDPs from camps to their local homelands. Until there is a stable, sustained peace deal involving the major Darfuri rebel groups, this will likely be a hard sell for the majority of IDPs. Taha is correct, however, to note that the longer IDPs remain in camps in Darfur, the more difficult it will be for them to return to their homes and support themselves independent of foreign aid. On North/South relations, Taha's assessment of the North's role in the Sudan civil war, as a refuge for Southerners fleeing the violence, is paternalistic, and reflects the view of many in the regime that the Southern Sudanese are incapable of governing themselves and need the North's protection. Calling for the US to declare support for a united Sudan (also raised by NISS Chief Salah Ghosh), Taha signaled an increasing realization by the regime that within two years the South will likely secede. His prediction that Southerners would vote for union is either a show of optimism or a self-delusion. What is clear is that the regime is likely to continue to portray the GOSS as incompetent, and an independent South as not viable. The USG should continue to urge both the North and the South to adhere to the CPA, including the holding of a 2011 referendum on southern self termination, while tying positive incentives to CPA implementation. Perhaps most critically, discussion and negotiation between the parties for the "agreement after the agreement" (what will happen after 2011) must begin as soon as possible in order to reduce the chances of renewed conflict and ensure a peaceful separation, if and when it comes to that. END COMMENT

ASQUINO